

Cataract Treatment

An information booklet for patients

June 2008

Cataract Treatment

The optometrist who examined you suspects that your sight has been reduced by a cataract. They have suggested that you attend the hospital to see if an operation to remove the cataract would be helpful. This leaflet explains what a cataract is, what will happen during your hospital visit and what the operation involves. Please read this leaflet carefully and remember that having a cataract is not something to worry about.

It is helpful to attend the hospital with a friend or relative.

Please do not drive yourself as you will be given eye-drops which may temporarily blur your vision.

(research is looking at things such as smoking, alcohol and the effects of the sun. Evidence to show that any of them cause cataract is being evaluated)

- A lens with cataract does not have to go 'ripe'. An operation can be performed at any time.
- Cataract is not routinely treated with laser techniques.
- Cataract cannot come back but some patients may require additional laser treatment if their vision becomes blurred again following cataract surgery.
- Glasses which are usually necessary after the operation are not 'special' glasses and need not be expensive. You may be able to use the frame from your old glasses.
- Activities such as walking, bending over, driving, playing golf, gardening or washing your hair are not restricted after the operation.

The doctor will discuss this with you at the cataract clinic. Please ask if you have any particular concerns.

Is it certain that my vision will improve?

Removing the cataract should, if there are no complications, improve your vision. However, some patients may have other eye conditions which may limit the success of surgery. If this is the case with you the doctor will discuss this.

Myths you may have heard about cataract

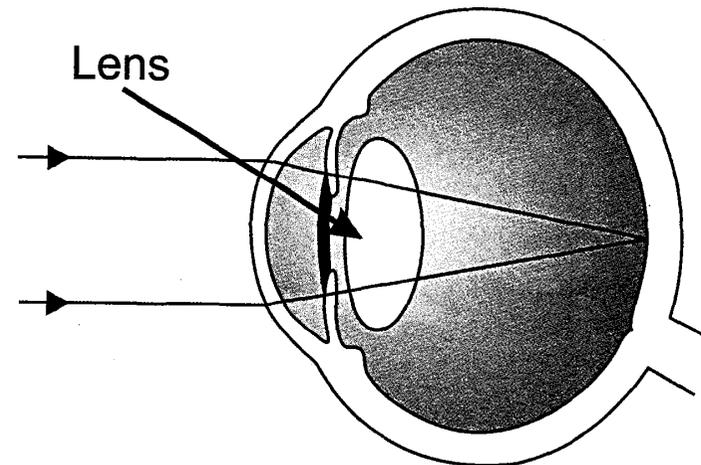
Cataract is surrounded by many myths, most of which have little truth in them.

- Cataract is not loose skin over the eye
- Cataract is not caused by having strained your eyes when you were young
- The causes of cataract are not known

What is a cataract?

Just as in a camera, the eye has lenses to focus the light. One of the lenses is in the eye itself. When a cataract develops, the lens becomes cloudy and light cannot pass through so easily. Cataracts usually develop with age but do sometimes occur in younger people.

Diagram of the eye



What are the symptoms of a cataract?

There may be a gradual reduction in sight. Some people experience increased problems with glare from bright lights, particularly driving at night.

Do I have to wait for the cataract to ripen?

No. The optometrist and the eye doctor will ask you questions to find out how the cataract is affecting your life. If it appears to be causing problems then an operation will probably help.

Can a cataract be prevented or treated with drops?

No. The only way of treating a cataract causing a problem with your sight is to have an operation.

What must I not do after the operation?

You can behave much as normal, but try not to rub the eye.

Will I be able to drive?

You should discuss this with the surgeon prior to discharge.

When can I go back to work?

This will vary according to the individual and your job. Please discuss this with the doctor in the pre-operative clinic.

What should I bring to the cataract clinic?

Your glasses and a list of your medications.

Are there any risks in cataract surgery?

As with all operations there can be complications. These happen very rarely but if they do they can be serious.

to proceed with the operation and what sort of anaesthetic you would like.

Most patients have local anaesthetic and are awake during the operation. A general anaesthetic can be given if you prefer and are fit. Occasionally the eye surgeon may advise one.

At this visit a date will be agreed for surgery.

There will be lots of opportunities for questions, so don't be afraid to ask them.

What happens on the day of surgery?

Most operations are performed as day cases. If you are an inpatient you may have to come in a night before the operation and go home the day after the operation. This applies to only a very few patients. The ward nurse will meet you and drops will be put in the eye to enlarge the pupil.

You will go to the theatre in a chair or, if having a general anaesthetic, on a trolley. The anaesthetic will be given and you will be taken to theatre for the surgery. If you are having a local anaesthetic a nurse will always be with you and can hold your hand.

The operation involves the removal of the natural cloudy lens and the insertion of a clear plastic replacement lens (the implant). A small incision is made in the eye. Usually you require no stitches but they may sometimes be necessary.

Following the operation, which takes in all around 30 minutes, you will return to the ward.

A short time afterwards a nurse or doctor will examine the eye and you will be able to go home. Patients having general anaesthetic will be in hospital for slightly longer.

You will not be able to drive yourself home.

What happens after the operation?

You will need to take some eye-drops for a few weeks after surgery. An appointment to be seen in the post-operative clinic will be made.

Following this you will be able to go either to the hospital optometrist or to your own optometrist for new glasses about five weeks after the operation itself. If you have a cataract in the other eye a date for an operation will be made at the time of your post-operative visit.

Will I still need glasses?

Yes, you probably will. The eye surgeon will try and leave you with good vision in the distance unless you have special needs. However, you will need reading glasses and you may need distance glasses as well to achieve sharp vision after surgery.

What happens at the hospital?

When you arrive at the hospital a nurse will explain what happens during the clinic and during the cataract operation. You will be at the hospital for about three hours as there is a lot to do. A nurse will measure your vision. An eye doctor will carefully examine your eyes to see if there are any other problems affecting your eyesight. Drops will be given to enlarge the pupil to help the doctor.

The eyes will be measured so that the correct strength of implant is used to replace the natural lens with the cataract. A nurse will ask you about your general health and check your blood pressure and blood sugar.

Finally, if the eye doctor considers that you may be helped by a cataract operation, you will be asked if you wish